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FACT SHEET

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2006–2007 Ralph N. Kleps Award Recipient: JusticeCorps, Superior Court of Los Angeles County

A collaborative effort by the court, local colleges, and legal aid organizations to recruit and train 100 students to perform a year of community service by assisting self-represented litigants throughout the legal process in unlawful detainer, family law, and small claims cases and other civil cases.

Why This Program Is Innovative

This program is a formal collaboration of a court, universities, and legal aid agencies to provide many well-trained, long-term interns to enhance self-help programs.

Problems the Program Was Designed to Address

- Increasing numbers of self-represented litigants.
- Court staff only able to provide minimal assistance.
- Many parties with low literacy, unable to use computerized self-help resources.
- Shortage of volunteers and interns who could make a long-term commitment necessary to complete the required training.

Program Goals and Desired Outcomes

- Provide self-represented litigants with a better understanding of the unfamiliar court system.
- Give litigants clear information and quick referral to appropriate resources.
- Under attorney supervision, personally assist litigants in completing accurate pleadings, written orders, and judgments.

Actual Program Outcomes and Benefits

- Litigants express pleasure with the level of attention and quality of service.
- The number of litigants assisted at self-help centers increased by 11% the first year.
- The first year, 98% of litigants received appropriate referrals.
- With JusticeCorps assistance, parties completed legal forms with 94% accuracy the first year.
- Site supervisors' evaluations indicate high overall satisfaction with JusticeCorps members.
- The program has developed effective recruitment and training strategies and provides a valuable experience for students contemplating legal careers.

How This Program Was Originally Funded

Through collaboration with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), grant funding was obtained from AmeriCorps to develop and operate this model. The AmeriCorps grant for 100 member slots provides a \$255,366 maximum annual award and requires a minimum 33% match.

To encourage development of this innovative model, the AOC provided the Superior Court of Los Angeles County with Promising Practices grants averaging \$83,333 annually for the initial three years. Los Angeles has contributed an annual in-kind match of at least \$42,444.

Ongoing Budget and Staffing Impacts

JusticeCorps operational staff consists of a one-third-time supervising attorney, a full-time program director, a full-time coordinator, and a three-fifths-time clerical assistant. JusticeCorps funds five part-time coordinators from their student alumni. Coordinators help recruit and coordinate members at partnering universities.

How the Program Is Sustained

- Los Angeles continues to increase its contributions to sustain and increase program development.
- JusticeCorps is evaluated according to AmeriCorps guidelines. The grant contract includes logic model performance measures.
- In 2005–2006, focus groups provided qualitative data on JusticeCorps' effect on the satisfaction of the parties served. Where gaps are identified, services are adjusted to better meet the needs of litigants.

Recommendations for Courts Wanting to Replicate This Program

- Courts attempting to replicate a 100-member JusticeCorps program will incur a minimum cost of \$125,777 yearly to meet the cash or in-kind 33% match.
- Regional collaborations may be required to provide service sites for 100 students.
- AmeriCorps requires that courts convene a committee of justice partners and service providers that will identify current processes following disposition and any roadblocks and recommend solutions to enhance service delivery.
- The AOC encourages the application of the program structure and materials created through consultation with Los Angeles court staff.

Contact:

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Additional resources:

Ralph N. Kleps Award information, www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/innovations
Superior Court of Los Angeles County's Web site: www.lasuperiorcourt.org